Leave No Trace and Crafting:

Are you being crafty and careful?

By Chris North, Mark Jones and Daniel Moore

On the surface Leave No Trace and Crafting seem like polar extremes, the one wanting to educate about minimizing outdoor recreation impacts, the other wanting to educate about using resources and harvesting. This article was inspired by conversations between advocates for Leave No Trace and Crafting over several years. We explored the two positions and then looked at how the goals of each position align. Our discussions uncovered some really interesting commonalities behind the different approaches and motivated us to write and communicate some of these ideas. We blended our writing together so there is generally no one voice in any section, however Mark Jones writes from his experiences in Crafting, Chris North writes from his experiences in Leave No Trace and Dan Moore brings some key questions that we should consider.

Crafting

To me an important part of introducing people to our wild places is engaging them with nature and fostering an affinity for the natural world. We perceive the world through five primary senses and ideally we can use them all. I enjoy introducing my own children and my students to the taste of various wild foods and I love working with natural materials: flax, raupo, astelia, supple jack, etc. A craft produced from the land might have practical utility or it might simply be art, but for me the process and the finished article are always rewarding. Crafting is a great way to engage students with nature and with each other.

Another obvious way to interact with the bush is to eat things that grow and live there. Children and adults alike are fascinated by things you can sample from a forest. The plants around them cease to be "just trees" when students bite into a berry or something else they realise can sustain them; they become allies.

Crafting, hunting and gathering are great ways to foster respect and develop judgement around when, where, and how to interact with a place so that one's impact is sustainable. I think a conscious part of our personal interactions with nature should be about kaitiakitanga or the concept of stewardship. With groups it is vital to find opportunities to impart those values.

It might appear a contradiction to harvest natural resources and promote environmental stewardship, but I think principles of sustainability are easier to convey when real choices have to be made. When harvesting from nature we are directly confronted by the impact we have on a place and sustainable practice is a vital part of the foundation of the activity. "Look but don't touch" is not a principle that students can readily transfer back to their lives; everything they buy, eat, or drink comes from nature and has an impact someplace. Crafting, hunting and gathering are great ways to foster respect and develop judgement around when, where, and how to interact with a place so one's impact is sustainable. I think kaitiakitanga or the concept of stewardship should be a conscious part of one's interaction with nature and the decisions made.

So as eco-sensitive as it sounds, I have never been able to buy into "leave only footprints and take only photographs". There are places where I think that that ethos is entirely appropriate; nature can be incredibly delicate and vulnerable to human impacts. At the same time nature is incredibly robust and resilient. Witness the aftermath of a big rain event causing earth slips and an associated timber loss on

a scale that dwarfs local human impacts on the environment- Mother Nature does not practice Leave No Trace. It is interesting however that a nature lover's eye will travel over such a landslide and register respect and awe, but a single cut branch hacked with an axe or a piece of litter on the ground will draw a frown- that is the scrutiny that mine and my students' impact must pass, that of the nature lover.

Leave No Trace

I am sure that most of us have come across inconsiderate behaviour or nasty impacts on our trips in the outdoors. How offensive we find the impact depends on our culture and values. New Zealand has a population that now lives mostly in cities and often with less access to natural settings. Over the years I noticed that many of my students were not aware of what was appropriate in the outdoors. Sometimes they left unnecessary impacts just because nobody had ever talked with them about what the best things to do in order to take care of plants, animals and respect other people. Often times it seemed as if their attitude was shaped by consumerism and the shopping mall experience where 'everything is here for our taking'. I thought that as an outdoor educator one of the benefits of going outdoors was to teach my students that there should be places where we learn to restrain ourselves, if we want to take something, we should first think carefully about why we want to take an item. One example that was recently submitted for the leave no trace blog was of a group out on a tramp who began collecting shells of the endangered giant snail. The group were a rough lot and they took great care of these shells and the shells came to mean a lot to them. Upon returning to town, the leader found out that snails often lay their eggs in empty shells. Sure enough, once they looked inside the shells, many contained baby snails, and the leader then spent the next couple of days returning the shells to the area where they were collected. The simple act of collecting an object can have effects beyond what we can conceive of, and I believe there should be places where we can learn to leave our consumerist tendencies behind.

Photos: Mark Jones

In the past we could all go out and cut down trees, flatten out the ground and build a camp. These days I don't want to go into the hills and find a series of high impact camps, it takes something important away from my experience. It isn't just a Pākehā idea either. Whatungarongaro he tangata, toitū te whenua can be interpreted as "people come and go, leave the land undisturbed". Kevin Prime of Ngati Hine stated that Leave No Trace is very consistent with the Maori belief that when you are respecting the land you are respecting the people who have mana whenua over the land regardless of where it is. He gave examples of taua (war party) wanting to avoid leaving any traces, but also a tira (travelling party) just passing through the rohe (territory) of another iwi in general and the tradition of leaving no trace out of both safety and respect.

As an educator I had always struggled with the Environmental Care Code, it seemed dry and lifeless to me. My work in education and my desire to reduce these impacts motivated me to do something about it and so I got involved with Leave No Trace and in 2008, together with a group of passionate people, we introduced the idea to New Zealand. I find the Leave No Trace principles are great way to open up discussions about outdoor recreation impacts. I was drawn to Leave No Trace because it is about learning how to minimise our impacts so that the integrity of ecosystems and the

quality of outdoor experiences can be sustained.

Common Ground?

Crafting seeks to connect people to places through interacting with the resources that are present in a sustainable way. Leave No Trace seeks to connect people to places in ways that are respectful with a view to 'responsible outdoor recreation' and minimum impact practices. As such, at their core they have a similar goal but go about it quite differently. In the past these two approaches have been set up as oppositional. In countries such as the USA, the extremes have been polarised by descriptions of Leave No Trace advocates: "The most devoted backpackers fluffed the grass on which they slept, gave up toilet paper rather than burying it, and preferred drinking their dishwater to pouring it on the ground" (Turner, 2002, p. 462), and generally describing people in the outdoors like bulls in a china shop. Conversely nature-craft became the unsustainable domain of plunderers and exploiters who left a trail of destruction behind them. These unhelpful extremes don't really contribute to a shared understanding which is what we are seeking here. In Aotearoa New Zealand, I believe our outdoor culture is less polarised, many trampers are also kayakers, mountain bikers, hunters, anglers and have a more pragmatic approach to caring for the outdoors.

So what do Leave No Trace and Crafting have in common. Let us use campfires as "a third space" to explore between the two extreme positions.

Looking at fires through Leave No Trace and Crafting

Fire-Craft influence

Campfires have long been part of New Zealand's camping culture. All three authors have had fantastic experiences around fires. Whether it was on a beach, or in an open fireplace in an old hut or under the stars. Often the fire was used for cooking, but it meant so much more to us than a stove. It evokes rich histories of ancient people and protection from the elements and probably wildlife too. Jonathan Taylor (2005) writes about his experiences of fire in New Zealand; "we have been spellbound by fire, its vivaciousness, its sheer mystery" (p.18). Fires can have a magnetic and relaxing effect on us, at times almost approaching magic. Thinking about fire lighting can open our eyes to native plant identification that is more than just rote learning names. These plants can help us cook dinner. The rise of Crafting approaches has gone someway to re-invigorating fire lighting techniques and developing a knack for finding dry wood in an often soggy country.

Leave No Trace influence

Within the Leave No Trace community, fires are a pretty hot topic (pun intended). I believe the first question about lighting a fire should not be "why not?" but rather "why?". Some of the worst impacts of any outdoor recreation contexts are associated with fires that get out of control and burn entire forests or wetlands. Our ecosystems are not fire adapted (unlike many countries like Australia where fire is a frequent event that plants and animals have adapted to). Often times I also see fires that are filled with broken bottles and food wrappers that never burned- fires seem to be magnets for rubbish. Light fuel stoves have revolutionised our ability to minimise impacts in outdoor recreation settings. Where fire was once a necessity for heat and cooking; it is now largely a choice. However, along with that has been a potential decline in knowledge on fire lighting and how to have an appropriate fire. I believe there are good reasons, such as the great learning and joy that comes from a fire experience.

The choice of having a fire should not be taken lightly. To have a fire or not are both important decisions and modelling this process to our students can help them make better decisions in

the future. To have a fire may risk further damage to an already fragile area but to exclude a fire may risk the loss of an important value and skill building experience. A mindful approach based on Leave No Trace and Crafting techniques to make the decision could then be based on some of the following:

What are the natural impacts of this fire?

Sustainability

- Can this ecosystem replace the wood I burn quickly or will my fire leave a lasting impact. For example: beaches, alpine areas, podocarp/beech forest all 'produce and replace' differently. Altitude and latitude, rainfall and temperature trends and forest succession all create ecosystems that produce wood and react to fire differently.

Risks

- How dry is the bush at the moment (rural fire risk indexes can be helpful here). Can I put the fire in a place where there is no chance of the fire spreading; finding an area with no organic matter (sand or rocks), avoiding overhanging trees, calm conditions, moisture levels…Where is the nearest extinguishing source? (water, sand, other)
- Will I reduce sensitive habitat or displace wildlife by starting this fire?
- How small can I make this fire? In North America there was a saying "white man's fires are big and everyone sits way back, red man's fires are small and everyone comes in close". If you want a spectacle, go to a fireworks display. Leave No Trace suggests that you should be able to break wood by hand "dead and dainty" makes the best firewood.

What are the social impacts of this fire?

- If I light this fire who will it potentially effect? Will this be positive/negative for their experience?
- Am I likely to influence others who will potentially use fires in the future? If so, what norms am I showing them? What are they learning about fire use?

Conclusion:

While from the outside, the approaches of Crafting and Leave No Trace might seem opposed, the ultimate purpose is to connect people with places in ways that are respectful and sustainable. Both approaches use decision making processes that explore the ecological and cultural appropriateness of activities. Both need to be conscious of impacts on the environment and ensure that messages we impart to students are consistent with practices that will be sustainable in the long-term.

Crafting foregrounds outdoor experiences as opportunities to be creative, find food and uses for the resources we find in the outdoors, and uses this as a starting point to connect people in meaningful ways to nature so that through emotional engagement we can learn to live more mindfully and respectfully.

Leave No Trace foregrounds outdoor experiences as opportunities to move beyond our own wants to start from a perspective of caring, and through considering non-human nature and others first, and from there to then think about what might be the best thing to do in this place.

Ultimately we believe that people should get outdoors, have a blast and think craftily and carefully wherever they go. We leave you with some further questions:

Questions to constantly keep asking:

What do I want my students to learn?

In our opinions we need to be teaching about both Crafting and Leave No Trace and promoting skilful, respectful, mindful, full of fun, connections and engagement with the places we go and the things we learn there. Within these ideas lie some further thoughts:

How vulnerable is this place?

Some areas are less resilient than others, slow growing, easily damaged; special care is required for our impacts to be sustainable. Some places should simply be avoided, stick to the boardwalk or track. The flammability of an area will affect decisions around fire use. If it is subject to frequent flood, or avalanche, then the impact you have may be miniscule in the greater scheme of things- the driftwood used is but a drop in the bucket of the tonnes flushed out to sea each flood event.

How often is this place used by others?

The drop in the bucket can soon

end up being a full pail with high use areas.

Who else cares about and has connections to this place?
Are we on land that has special status for others (e.g. a tapu or rahui (ban on harvesting), local conservationists or hunters)

How unique is this habitat?
Some areas have special status for the uniqueness of their plants and animals that might preclude some activities.

How confident am I that what I am doing is sustainable?
Do I have the knowledge and skills to minimise my impact in this place with this activity? (For example the threatened giant land snails discussed earlier are probably in the same endangered waka as long finned eels!).

References:

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Mark Jones *believes strongly in the importance of engaging with outdoor natural environments as part of healthy human development. He regards nature as a potent teacher. These views are not simply espoused, but lived in his own life. Engaging with nature in various challenging fashions is one way that he informs his teaching and furthers his own learning and development. The outdoors is a central pillar in Mark's life and has shaped his worldview and research directions. He is also a parent and enjoys introducing his children and his students to new ways of engaging with the outdoors.*

Daniel Moore *works as Curriculum Manager at Outward Bound New Zealand. His work focuses on course design and curriculum development. Other areas of work include outcomes research and staff training. Dan is a passionate backcountry user- he especially likes shared missions with his wife Clare.*

NZAEE Conference 2014 Report

By Faye Wilson Hill

The 2014 New Zealand Association of Environmental Education (NZAEE) was hosted by the Canterbury branch from Wednesday 15th to Friday 17th January with the theme of Shake Up! Ka huri to ao, Ka huri to whakaaro – a changing world, a new mind-set. The challenge put out by the organising committee was for delegates to come prepared to think about what is it that shakes you up and how that could be a catalyst for shifts in thinking and behaviour (rather than the earth beneath our feet).

Our first taste of this was through the panel discussion that included Eruera Tarena, Te Marino Lenihan and Rangiamrie Parata immediately after the mihi whakatau and welcome from Kay Giles CEO for CPIT. These three people working to advance the aspirations for Ngai Tahu talked about how earthquake legislation has enabled them to be 'at the table' as of right legally and for them it has literally enabled a 'foot in the door' to have an influence in decision making about how the future Christchurch will be shaped.

The second half of the first day was taken up with the experiential journeys which enabled people to see and experience the city and environs first hand. People were moved and 'stirred' by this time in the city – both for the loss but also the incredible passion and desire by people such as Juliet from *Rekindle* to make a difference and create alternatives to the predominant mind set of clear it away and start again. Many of the experiential